

March 5, 2015

Testimony in support of:

- SB 858, AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES AND THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE.
- HB 6784, AN ACT EXPANDING PAID SICK LEAVE.
- HB 6933, AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING FOR EMPLOYEES.

To the members of the Labor Committee:

My name is Jason Diaz. I've been in the service industry as a server or bartender since 2003. I'm originally from Meriden, and I recently moved to New Haven to be closer to my job. I have a 9-year-old son, and I am expected not only court-ordered support for him but also have to pay 100% of any extra curricular activities that he is involved in like baseball, drum lessons, and karate. I'm also a college graduate; I spent two years at community college and received my Bachelor's Degree in Communications major at Quinnipiac in May 2013. I did receive very helpful grants and financial aid, both federal and from the university itself while I was there, but I am still very much in debt from pursuing my education.

I work hard, and as a student I am doing my best to give myself and my family more financial security in the future, but service workers like myself are held back by many policies that allow our employers take advantage of us and make it hard or impossible to make enough to cover the costs of living. That is why I hope you will support several of the bills being heard today; because workers like myself need comprehensive policy changes to give us more financial stability.

For example, my son: nine-year-olds need stability. My son's mother and I are separated, and I have visitation with him every other weekend. But I have to work Friday through Sunday, so I only see him for three hours every weekend. I drive him to his drum lessons on Tuesday nights, and I treasure the little time that we have. Even though my boss knows that, they still schedule me for Tuesday shifts. I want to be a good example for my son - that's what got me through the process of finishing my degree - but how much influence can I have when I only see him for a few hours each week? Sometimes I get sent home early which means I make less money than expected, which is tough when you have a kid who depends on you. HB 6933 would allow me to make requests for my schedule without being punished by my employer and ensure that I can plan my finances and pay my bills.

Last fall, the a health inspector came to the restaurant I am currently working. I was really sick, sniffing and drinking tea, but my boss told me to say that I was fine. He told the whole staff to say that we have paid sick days. We don't. I could have used one. I believe it is because the restaurant does not have enough employees to be covered by the law. Please expand the paid sick days law to cover all workers, not just employees in places with more than 50 workers.

I also make less than minimum wage because I am supposed to earn tips at my job, so my employer is allowed to pay me less than minimum wage. What we do is servitude. It's not like other jobs: if a chef messes up an order or if the front of house is mismanaged, I might not get a good tip, and making \$5.65 per hour is not enough even with tips. Four or five months out of the year, I average barely ten dollars an hour because the industry, especially in central Connecticut, comes to a standstill. We need you to pass these bills so workers like me can support ourselves and our families. I firmly believe that not having these policies is leading all of us to economic collapse.

Thank you for your time.

Jason Diaz
New Haven